

PENHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

THE BEST WE CAN BE TOGETHER

Headteacher: Linda Rankin B.A.

I am writing to formally object to the proposal to close Penhill Primary School and amalgamate it into Swindon Academy. I have several objections why this move would not benefit the children of Penhill Primary.

Should this proposal go ahead, I feel that it will create a school with a population in excess of 2000. Evidence shows that large schools can have a serious detrimental effect on the academic progress and wellbeing of children. Our children are especially vulnerable and benefit from being in a small, caring environment; a fact which was acknowledged in our Ofsted report in 2007. The headteacher and senior leadership team know all the children very well, their individual needs and learning styles, their parents, carers and home environments. I therefore, have serious concerns that becoming part of the larger Swindon Academy could only have a negative impact on them.

I am not convinced that the Local Authority recommendations are being driven by a desire to improve the life chances of our children. Both Ofsted and our School Improvement Partner (SIP) have stated that as we have fully embraced the intensive support programmes offered by Swindon LA, our results have steadily improved and are set to continue in this way. "School leaders embraced the intensive support provided by the local authority to help raise standards. As a result, there is clear direction for raising standards and a steady improvement has been secured in pupils' achievement.....the capacity for further improvements is satisfactory. School leaders are clearly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school to raised standards further". (Ofsted, Sept 2007) Our first note of visit from our SIP this year reports that "the school has increased capacity for improvement...therefore the local authority support will be reduced this term." (Sept 2008)

I am seriously concerned that Swindon Academy are not yet achieving Government set targets at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4, and therefore, they need to address this fundamental issue before taking on further responsibility and more children. Furthermore, we know that the Penhill community also share our concerns and this is demonstrated by the low percentage of Year 6 children transferring from Penhill and Sevenfields primaries.

Moreover, the Secretary of State has publically stated that secondary schools which do not meet their floor targets will face closure. As Swindon Academy only managed to achieve 9% A* to C grades at GCSE in 2008, I feel it would be questionable for us to become part of a school which still faces a huge challenge at Key Stage 4.